2. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said protected area is further defined by storage of [framing characters] said border characters wherein said one and said next occurrence of said border character are distinguished from a content occurrence of said border character forming a portion of said digital content.

3. (Amended) A method according to claim 2 wherein said certificate includes line elements, and at least one of said line elements begins with one of said [framing] border characters and ends with one of said [framing] border characters.

15. (Amended) A digitally stored digital certificate comprising:

a digital storage medium;

a digital certificate data structure stored upon said storage medium, said data structure defining a protected area as including a sequence of characters occurring between one and a next occurrence of a designated protected area border character;

at least one digital component stored in said protected area; and

a digital signature stored in said certificate data structure but outside said protected area, said digital signature being encrypted and a function of said at least one digital component stored in said protected area.

16. (Amended) A digital certificate according to claim 15 wherein said protected area is established by storing [framing characters in] protected area border characters in a sequence of characters comprising said digital certificate data structure.

17. (Amended) A digital certificate according to claim 16 wherein said certificate data structure includes line elements, and at least one of said line elements begins with one of said [framing] border characters and ends with one of said [framing] border characters.

29. (Amended) A digitally stored digital certificate of product ownership of a given product by a given product owner, said certificate comprising:

a digital storage medium;

a digital certificate data structure stored upon said storage medium, said data structure defining a protected area as including a sequence of characters occurring between one and a next occurrence of a designated protected area border character;

a first digital component stored in said protected area and identifying said given product;

a second digital component stored in said protected area and identifying said given product owner; and

a digital signature in said certificate data structure but outside said protected area, said digital signature being encrypted and a function of at least said first and second components stored in said protected area.